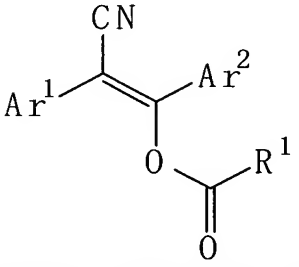
Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

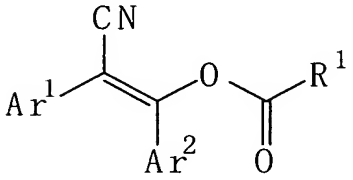
1. (Currently Amended) A process for stereoselectively producing an E-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound of formula (3)



(3)

~~compound of formula (3)~~

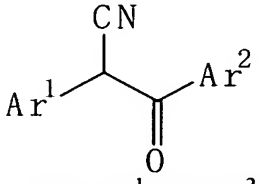
~~wherein Ar^1 and Ar^2 are independently of each other an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and R^1 is an alkyl group that may be substituted, or an aromatic substituent that may be substituted,~~ or a Z-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound of formula (4)



(4)

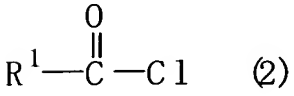
~~wherein Ar^1, Ar^2 and R^1 have meaning similar to the above,~~

which comprises reacting a 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1)



(1)

~~wherein Ar^1 and Ar^2 have meaning similar to the above,~~ with an acid chloride of formula (2)



(2)

wherein

~~R^1 has meaning similar to the above, characterized in that~~ Ar^1 and Ar^2 are independently of each other an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and R^1 is an alkyl group that may be substituted, or an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, and

the reaction is conducted with removal of hydrogen chloride as a by-product from the system without using a base, or by using an organic base as a base or an inorganic base of alkali metal or alkaline earth metal as a base, to thereby regulate stereostructure of reaction product.

2. (Currently Amended) The process for stereoselectively producing the E-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the reaction of the 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) with the acid chloride of formula (2) is conducted with removal of hydrogen chloride as a by-product from the system without using a base.

3. (Currently Amended) The process for stereoselectively producing the E-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the reaction of the 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) with the acid chloride of formula (2) is conducted by using an organic base as a base.

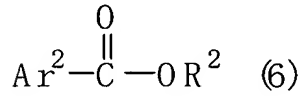
4. (Currently Amended) The process for stereoselectively producing the Z-3-acyloxyacrylonitrile compound according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the reaction of the 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) with the acid chloride of formula (2) is conducted by using an inorganic base of alkali metal or an inorganic base of alkaline earth metal.

5. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein ~~is used~~ the 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) ~~wherein Ar^1 and Ar^2 have meaning similar to~~ has been produced by reacting an acetonitrile compound of formula (5)

Ar^1CH_2CN (5)

~~the above, which is produced by reacting an acetonitrile compound of formula (5)~~

with an aromatic ester compound of formula (6)



~~wherein Ar^1 has meaning similar to the above, with an aromatic ester compound of formula (6)~~

wherein Ar^2 is an aromatic substituent that may be substituted, ~~has meaning similar to the above,~~ and R^2 is an alkyl group that may be substituted, by use of alkali metal alkoxide in an aliphatic hydrocarbon solvent, while removing alcohol as a by-product by azeotropic distillation in a separating tank.

6. (Currently Amended) The process according to ~~claim 1,~~ claim 5, wherein ~~is used 3-oxopropionitrile compound of formula (1) wherein Ar^1 and Ar^2 have meaning similar to the above, which is produced by reacting the acetonitrile compound of formula (5) with the aromatic ester compound of formula (6) by use of alkali metal alkoxide in an aliphatic hydrocarbon solvent, while removing alcohol as a by-product by azeotropic distillation in the presence of a polar solvent in a separating tank.~~ said alcohol has been removed in the presence of a polar solvent.

7-12. (Canceled)

13. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein Ar^1 is a phenyl group that may be substituted, a thiazolyl group that may be substituted, a pyrazolyl group that may be substituted, or a triazolyl group that may be substituted.

14. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein Ar^2 is a pyrazolyl group that may be substituted, or a thiazolyl group that may be substituted.

15. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein Ar^1 is a 4-tert-butylphenyl group, and Ar^2 is 1,3,4-triemthyl-5-pyrazolyl group or a 3-chloro-1,4-dimethyl-5-pyrazolyl group.

16. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) The process according to claim 1, wherein Ar^1 is a 2-phenyl-5-ethyl-1,2,3-triazol-4-yl group, and Ar^2 is 1,3,4-trimethyl-5-pyrazolyl group or a 3-chloro-1,4-dimethyl-5-pyrazolyl group.